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ABSTRACT

Television is an integral part of American culture, and has the ability to play a major role in shaping belief systems, particularly for the youngest and most impressionable viewers. This study is the third annual study of diversity of characters in prime time television programming. The study examined the first two episodes of each prime time entertainment series airing on the six broadcast networks. The findings indicate that despite ongoing emphasis, encouragement, and pressure on the part of media advocates, civil rights groups, government officials, and even some entertainment industry leaders, the networks have yet to produce a prime time season that is representative of the diversity that young people experience and will undoubtedly continue to experience as maturing adults. Among the major findings are the following: (1) family structures are more obvious for white youth than for youth of color; (2) a majority of white youth were shown interacting with their parents but only a fourth of Latino youth were shown doing the same; (3) African American families served exclusively as the focus of situation comedies; (4) marital and parental status was more easily identifiable for women than men; (5) gay and lesbian characters are increasingly visible, with white males playing the majority roles; (6) disabled characters are increasingly visible, also with white males playing the majority of roles; (7) positions such as service workers, unskilled laborers, and criminals were played only by persons of color; and (8) whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders were portrayed more often as professionals; African American and Latino characters were more often portrayed as law enforcement; and Native Americans were typecast as spiritual advisors. (HTH)

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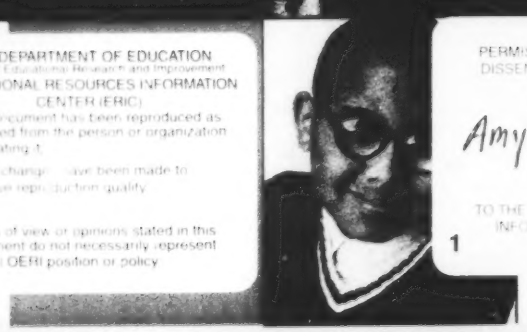

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Children Now is a research and action organization dedicated to assuring that children grow up in economically secure families, where parents can go to work confident that their children are supported by quality health coverage, a good early education, safe, productive things to do after school and a positive media environment. Children Now designs its strategies to improve children's lives while at the same time helps America build a sustained commitment to putting children first. Recognized for its expertise in media as a tool for change, Children Now is an independent, nonpartisan organization.

The Children & the Media Program works to improve the quality of news and entertainment media both for children and about children's issues, paying particular attention to media images of race, class and gender. We seek to accomplish our goals through media industry outreach, independent research and public policy development.

Acknowledgements

The C.S. Mott Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies provided generous financial support for "Fall Colors 2001-02."

Photos

All photos have been selected representations of positive portrayals of diversity in prime time television and are used courtesy of the networks and/or their production companies.

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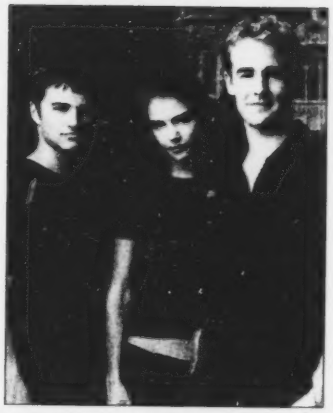


Dawson's Creek, The WB

Cover photos *(left to right) Dark Angel*, FOX, *Off Centre*, The WB, *Philly*, ABC, *Will & Grace*, NBC, *Enterprise*, UPN, *Girlfriends*, UPN, *Frasier*, NBC, *Becker*, CBS, *NYPD Blue*, ABC, *My Wife and Kids*, ABC, *Malcolm in the Middle*, FOX.

Key Findings

During the Fall 2001-02 season, a youth watching prime time on the six major television networks would most likely see:

One on One, UPN

Family and Youth

Family structures being more obvious for white youth than for youth of color.

The majority of white youth interacting with their parents but only a fourth of Latino youth doing the same.

African American families nearly exclusively serving as the focus of situation comedies.

African American families headed by professionals and shown as more affluent than white families.

Family life not serving as a central program focus for Asian/Pacific Islanders, Latinos or Native Americans.

Race and Ethnicity

A world still primarily populated by able-bodied, single, heterosexual, white males under 40.

A world of more diversity in the 10 o'clock hour, but a more homogenous and segregated one during the 8 o'clock hour when he/she is most likely to be watching television.

A world in which the overall number of Latino faces increased from last year, though the majority were found in secondary and tertiary roles and nearly half of these characters held low status positions and occupations.

A world with few Native Americans and a world where Native American women do not exist.

Gender, Identity and Equity

A continuing stark contrast between occupations held by men and women.

Marital and parental status that was more easily identifiable for women than men.

An increased visibility of gay and lesbian characters, with white males playing the majority of roles.

An increased visibility of disabled characters, with white males playing the majority of roles.

Class and Status

Only people of color (in the top five primary recurring character occupations) holding positions as service workers, unskilled laborers and criminals.

Whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders more often portrayed as professionals, African American characters and Latino characters more often portrayed in law enforcement and Native Americans typecast as spiritual advisers.

"Most of the time when you see minorities, they're always working for somebody."

African American youth

Media images constitute America's chief and most immediately recognizable cultural export. These images and their implicit messages shape the worldviews of millions. What story do we tell the world, especially to its youngest and most impressionable viewers, about ourselves when certain groups are consistently privileged, others subjugated and still others altogether unseen? As our culture's primary storyteller, television creators have the power to break down stereotypes, promote inclusivity and build greater understanding. "Fall Colors 2001-02" tells the networks' own story: programming that fails to reflect the true American picture.

ER, NBC

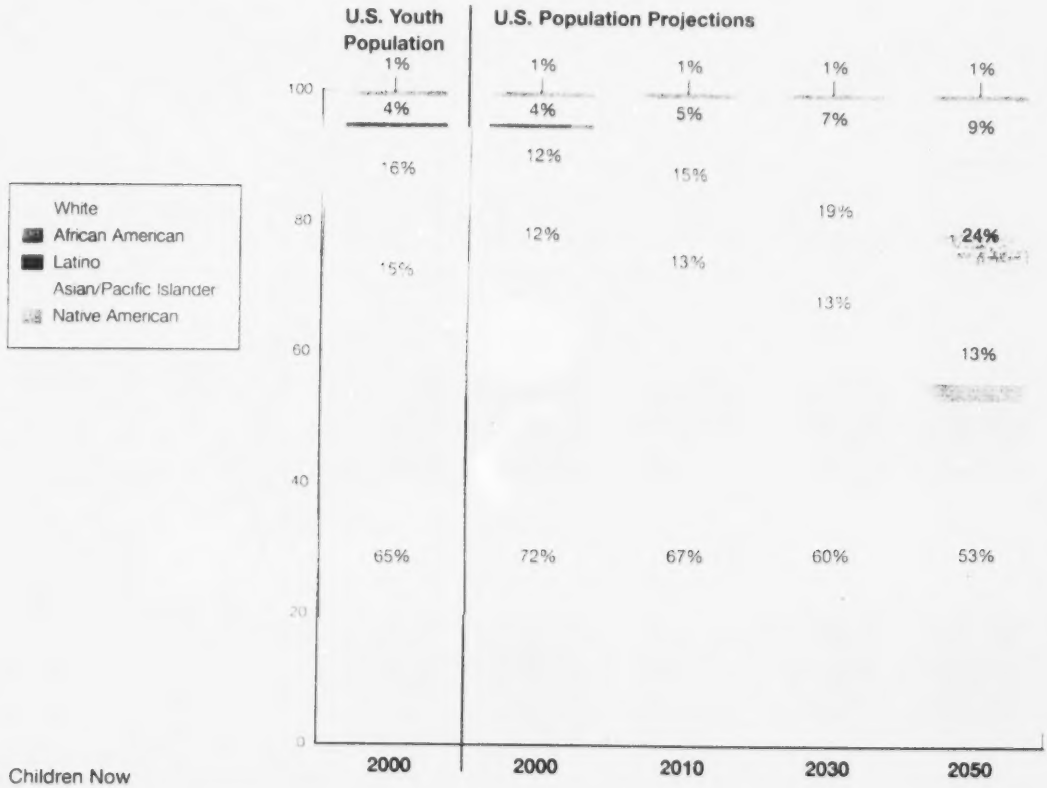
Introduction

"The shows on network TV represent the past, not the future."

—Kweisi Mfume,
President, NAACP

Television, particularly prime time programming, occupies a central position in our culture as a storyteller, conveying much about what is normal, acceptable and expected, as well as what is irrelevant and outside of the mainstream.[1] It also possesses a unique opportunity to shape the perceptions and opinions of millions. The 2000 Census has revealed not only rapid changes in the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States but also new emerging characteristics of marriage, family, the workforce and class status. Inarguably, these changes have implications for the well-being of young people today and in the years ahead. In any discussion of how we prepare young people for the challenges they will face in the coming years, we must take into account the narrative that television presents to us about ourselves.

What story does prime time television tell our youth about diversity and tolerance through its portrayals and non-portrayals of race, gender and class? Can it better serve both the developmental needs and aesthetic desires of our nation's young people? What kinds of opportunities does and can it provide for cross-cultural learning?



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Children Now's previous research has demonstrated that youth recognize the role media play in providing lessons about diversity and in validating diverse communities. Children Now's current research shows that despite ongoing emphasis, encouragement and pressure on the part of media advocates, civil rights groups, government officials and even some entertainment industry leaders, the networks have yet to produce a prime time season that is representative of the diversity that young people experience and will undoubtedly continue to experience as maturing adults.

Law & Order, NBC

Recognizing that television is an integral part of American culture, and that it has the ability to play a major role in shaping belief systems, particularly for the youngest and most impressionable viewers, Children Now has tracked television diversity through the most comprehensive examination to date of prime time programming. "Fall Colors 2001-02," the third annual study of diversity in prime time, can be used by the television industry, academics and advocates as an assessment tool to measure progress on diversity. Set against the benchmarks established three years ago, "Fall Colors 2001-02" continues to serve as a tool to advance the discussio . about diverse representation on prime time and inform key decisions for the next programming season.

Survivor: Africa, CBS

Key Definitions

"Fall Colors" examines a number of indicators across the overall prime time line-up in order to capture an essential picture of the *who, what, when* and *where* of diversity. **"Fall Colors 2001-02"** utilizes several definitions and categories from previous studies to enhance its prime time diversity examination and allow for comparisons.

Program Diversity Index (PDI)

The **Program Diversity Index** examines the racial and ethnic diversity of a particular television program. The PDI allows for the comparison of racial and ethnic compositions of programs across networks and genres. It can also pinpoint where diversity occurs and does not occur – i.e. are *all white* programs seen more on a particular network? Do *all black* shows tend to be situation comedies? Do *mixed* shows tend to be in particular time slots?

Program Diversity Index

Program Diversity Index	Description
All White	All characters in the Program Character Set identified racially as "white"
All Black	All characters in the Program Character Set identified racially as "African American"
Only 1	All characters in the Program Character Set but one belonging to the same racial group
Mixed	Program Character Set includes a mix of racial and ethnic characters that is not all white, all black, nor only one*

* Note: In the case of a Program Character Set with only two characters, each of a different race, the Set is designated mixed rather than only one.

Gilmore Girls, The WB

Character Role Types (CRT)

"Fall Colors 2001-02" continues to categorize the widest range of prime time performers, from actors in the opening credits to guest stars and cameo appearances to background characters. All characters with speaking roles were included for analysis in this study. Recording **Character Role Types** allows us to determine if there are differences in the ways characters of different racial groups contribute to the story – i.e., are characters of color seen in recurring or non-recurring roles? By expanding this detailed recording initiated by the Screen Actors Guild, "Fall Colors 2001-02" seeks to deepen the dialogue on diversity.

Character Role Types

Primary Recurring: Actor appears in opening cast credits, is involved in the primary story line of most episodes.

Primary Non-Recurring: Actor does not appear in opening cast credits, is a guest star involved in the primary story line of one or two episodes (clearly identified as a non-recurring character).

Secondary Recurring: Actor does not appear in opening cast credits but appears regularly on the series and contributes to story line development.

Secondary Non-Recurring: Actor does not appear in opening cast credits but plays a supporting guest role.

Tertiary: Character with a minor speaking part that does not affect the outcome of the story line.

For example, on the ABC hit *The Practice*, the characters may be defined:

Character Role Examples

Character Role Type	Actor	Character	Description
Primary Recurring	Steven Harris	Eugene Young	Attorney who is a partner in the law practice.
Primary Non-Recurring	Dylan Baker	Keith Ellison	U.S. Senator accused of murder. Appears in the two-part premiere for the 2001 season.
Secondary Recurring	Ray Abruzzo	Detective Mike McGuire	Police detective who appears regularly to assist prosecutors in collecting evidence for their cases.
Secondary Non-Recurring	Emmy Rossum	Allison Ellison	Daughter of Senator Ellison. Plays a secondary role in the first part of the 2001 premiere.
Tertiary	George Anthony Bell	Court Clerk	Has one line announcing the arrival of the judge to the courtroom.

Program Character Set (PCS)

As previously noted, "Fall Colors 2001-02" categorizes all performers by a Character Role Type that allows for the examination of role sub-groups and their contribution to the storyline. A further refinement resulting in a **Program Character Set** allows for the measurement of specific sets of characters on a particular television show. Utilizing the PCS helps to pinpoint where diversity occurs and does not occur in the cast of any given show. For example, the PCS can measure the diversity on *The Practice* (ABC) when one looks at the entire cast versus when one looks at the main characters only.

The Practice, ABC

Program Character Set

Program Character Set	Description
Entire Cast of Characters:	Includes all the speaking characters appearing in the two episodes examined.
Plot-Relevant Characters Only:	Includes primary and secondary characters only; excludes characters identified as "tertiary" who did not contribute to the development of the story line.
Recurring Characters Only:	Includes all primary and secondary characters who have recurring roles.
Primary Recurring Characters Only or Opening Credits Cast:	Includes the main characters who appear in the programs' opening credits sequences.

Tuning In

Percentage of Male and Female Characters
Total Prime Time Population

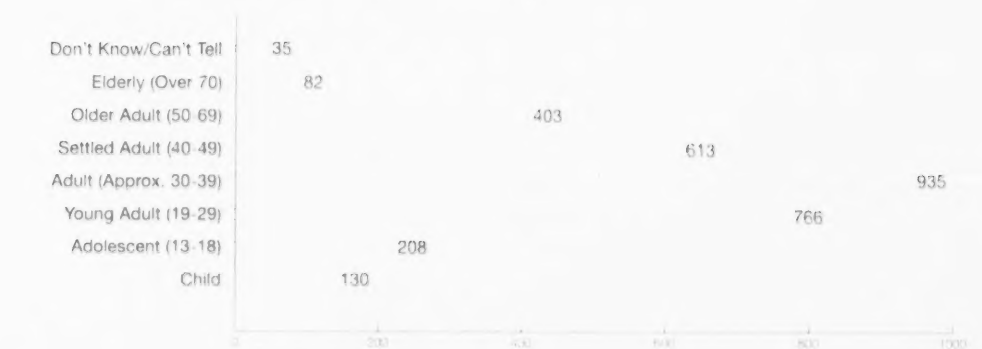
Male 64%

Female 36%

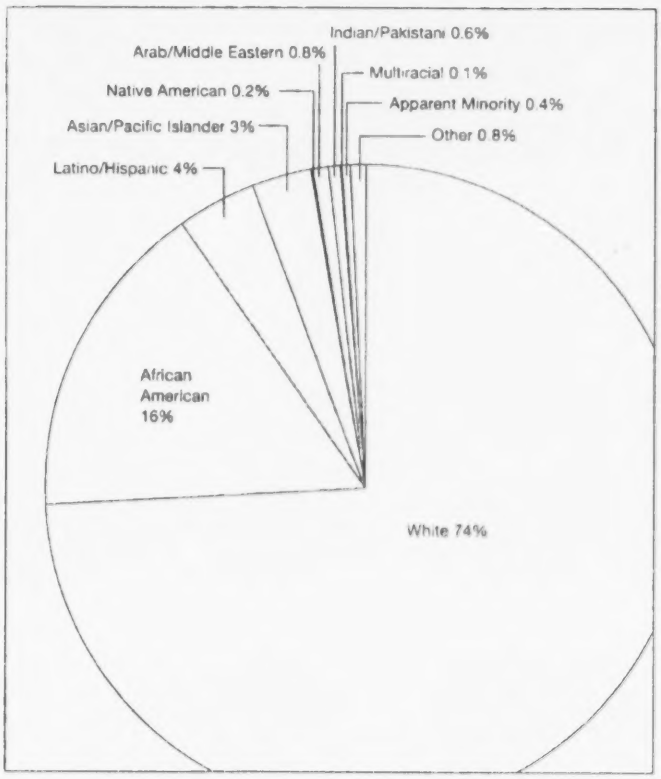
Researchers have long contended that entertainment media messages become part of our belief system about the world around us. Television is especially significant as it produces and perpetuates a social standard, one that becomes "taken for granted... a world of common sense."[1] When watching prime time television, what kind of world do young viewers see?

Character Role Types – All Prime Time Characters

Age – All Prime Time Characters



Race and Ethnicity – All Prime Time Characters



Look Out

If the population of the 2001-02 prime time season were a room of 100 people...

74 people would be white

16 people would be African American

4 people would be Latino

3 people would be Asian/Pacific Islanders

1 person would be Arab/Middle Eastern

1 person would be Indian/Pakistani

1 person would be somewhat unidentifiable, possibly Native American, multiracial, an apparent ethnic minority or perhaps an extraterrestrial

64 people would be men

There would be no Native American women in this room

12 would be married

11 would be under the age of 18

7 would have parents in the room

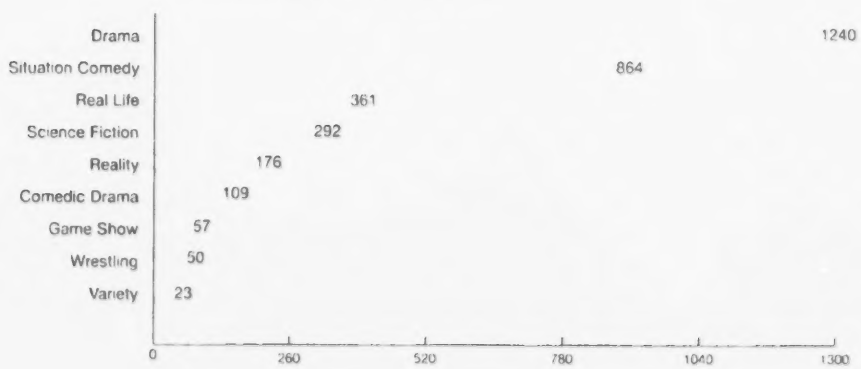
30 would be between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine

1 person would be gay or lesbian

1 person would be disabled

1 person would be mentally ill

Distribution of All Characters by Genre



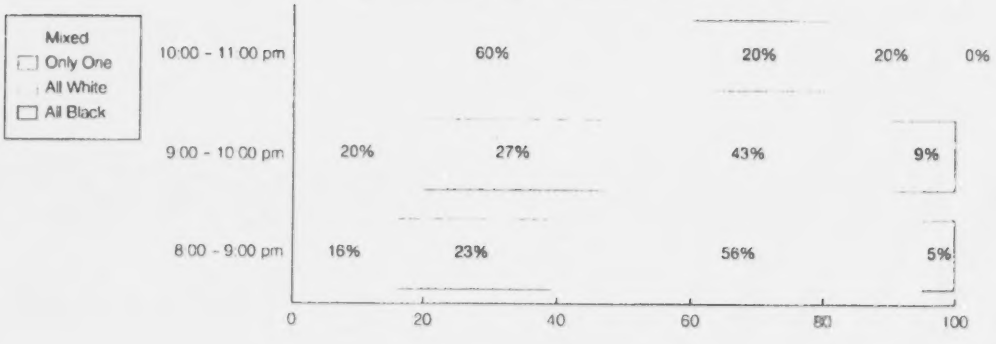
What's on?

"**Fall Colors 2001-02**" finds that the networks' efforts to reflect our nation's diversity are still found in the casts of hour-long dramas airing later in the evening. The 10 o'clock hour continues to be the most diverse hour in all of prime time. Much of the incremental increases found in the diversity tracked by "Fall Colors 2001-02" can be attributed to the 10 o'clock hour dramas. While these increases may demonstrate the networks' response to reflect diversity, the effort is largely lost on prime time youth audiences. Nielsen data shows that young viewers of prime time television do most of their viewing during the 8 o'clock hour.

Third Watch, NBC

- **The 8 o'clock hour is the least racially diverse and the most segregated hour on prime time television.** Only 16% of programs in the 8 o'clock hour contained *mixed* opening credits casts. Moreover, more than half of the opening credit casts in the 8 o'clock hour (61%) were classified as either *all white* or *all black*.
- **The 9 o'clock hour offers only slight improvements in racial diversity.** One out of five programs in the 9 o'clock hour (20%) contained *mixed* opening credits casts, considerably less than prime time last year, in which almost one out of three programs (31%) were considered *mixed*. More than half of the programs in this year's 9 o'clock hour (52%) featured racially homogenous casts.
- **The 10 o'clock hour was the most diverse in all of prime time, with nearly four times more diversity than the 8 o'clock hour and three times more diversity than the 9 o'clock hour.** Sixty percent of the series during the 10 o'clock hour featured *mixed* opening credit casts.* Last year, *mixed* opening credits casts comprised 67% of the programs in the 10 o'clock hour.

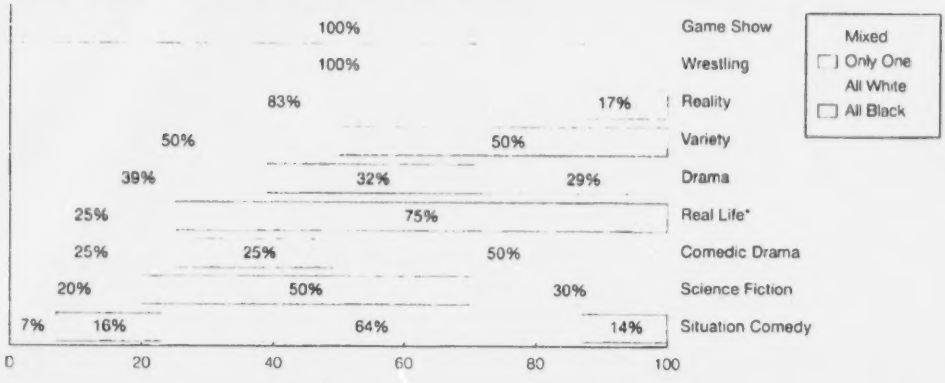
Diversity of Opening Credits Casts Across Prime Time Hours



* While there may be value in prime time shows that are *all white* or *all black*, the best examples of diversity and tolerance are found in hour-long dramas that air in late evening. These dramas provide glimpses into how people of different races, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation and ability accommodate difference, communicate, work together and mediate conflict.

Children Now research reveals that second to music videos, young people prefer situation comedies to any other type of programming.[1] A look at the Nielsen ratings demonstrates that the top twenty shows watched by young people in prime time are overwhelmingly skewed toward situation comedies. Yet this most popular genre for young people continues to be one of the least diverse genres in prime time television.

Program Diversity Index by Genre – Opening Credits Casts



- **Situation comedies were one of the least diverse program genres in prime time.** Seven percent of situation comedies featured *mixed* casts when examining the opening credits casts. Only the game show genre is less diverse: the opening credits casts of these shows were *all white* (100%).
- **In one fourth of situation comedies, the story lines were moved entirely by characters of the same racial group.** In 25% of comedies, characters of a different racial group appeared only in tertiary roles, often with just one line. Three of the situation comedies did not contain a single character of color in a speaking role.
- **Less than one fourth of all situation comedies featured primary recurring characters from more than one racial group.** Only 16% of situation comedies had opening credit casts with all characters but one belonging to the same racial group.
- **All series with *all black* opening credits casts were situation comedies.** Every one of the six programs with *all black* primary recurring characters was a situation comedy. In contrast, while programs with *all white* primary recurring casts were especially likely to be situation comedies (60%), they were also found in a variety of other genres.

Trait, Quality or Characteristic Youth Like in TV Characters*

They're funny	25%
I look up to them	11%
They act the way I want to act	9%
They are smart	7%

* *Real Life* programs are defined as series that depict real people in actual situations.

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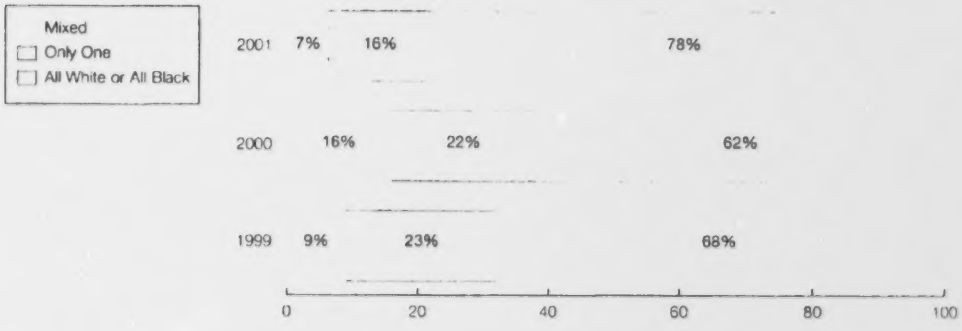
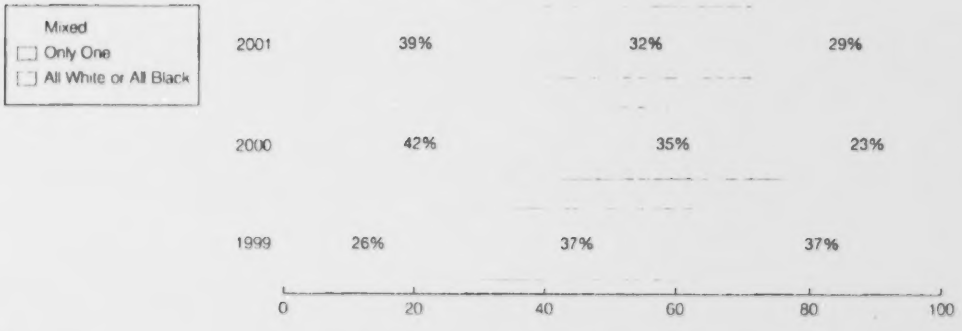
WWF Smackdown!, UPN

- **Dramas were five times more likely than comedies to feature *mixed* primary recurring casts.** Thirty-nine percent of dramas featured *mixed* opening credits casts compared to 7% of situation comedies. All but one of the drama series featured a *mixed* cast of plot relevant characters. Further, more than two thirds of the drama series (71%) featured at least one racial minority character in a primary recurring role.
- **One out of five science fiction programs featured a *mixed* cast.** Twenty percent of science fiction programs had *mixed* opening credits casts. Thirty percent of the programs were ***all white*** and the remaining shows (50%) had only one character of color.
- **Reality, variety and wrestling programs had a fair amount of diversity.** Five of the six reality programs (83%), one of the two variety programs (50%) and the sole wrestling program featured *mixed* opening credits casts.
- **Real life and game shows were overwhelmingly white when examining just the primary recurring casts.** Both of the game shows with recurring hosts featured white actors in the opening credits casts and white actors hosted three of the four real life series.

Program Diversity Index for Situation Comedies – Opening Credits Casts



Program Diversity Index for Dramas – Opening Credits Casts*



* Across the three seasons there have been no *all black* dramas.

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Malcolm in the Middle, FOX

Top Shows*

Top 20 scripted series for 2-11 year olds	
Survivor: Africa	Reality
Malcolm in the Middle	Comedy
The Simpsons	Comedy
Friends	Comedy
Bernie Mac	Comedy
King of the Hill	Comedy
Will and Grace	Comedy
Scrubs	Comedy
Titus	Comedy
CSI	Drama
Inside Schwartz	Comedy
The Parkers	Comedy
WWF Smackdown!	Wrestling
The Practice	Drama
One on One	Comedy
7th Heaven	Drama
My Wife and Kids	Comedy
Frasier	Comedy
According to Jim	Comedy
ER	Drama

Top 20 scripted series for 12-17 year olds	
Malcolm in the Middle	Comedy
The Simpsons	Comedy
Bernie Mac	Comedy
King of the Hill	Comedy
Friends	Comedy
7th Heaven	Drama
Titus	Comedy
Survivor: Africa	Reality
ER	Drama
That 70's Show	Comedy
Gilmore Girls	Drama
WWF Smackdown!	Wrestling
Family Guy	Comedy
Scrubs	Comedy
Grounded for Life	Comedy
Will and Grace	Comedy
Smallville	Science Fiction
The Practice	Drama
CSI	Drama
Undeclared	Comedy

* Nielsen Media Research, AA% K2-11 and K12-17, 10/1/01-11/25/01, Prime Time Daypart.
Note: Lists exclude special presentations, sports events, televised movies and concerts.

Who's on?

Through their presence and absence, prime time character portrayals can send strong messages to youth. Children Now research has shown that youth find it important to see people of their own race on television because:

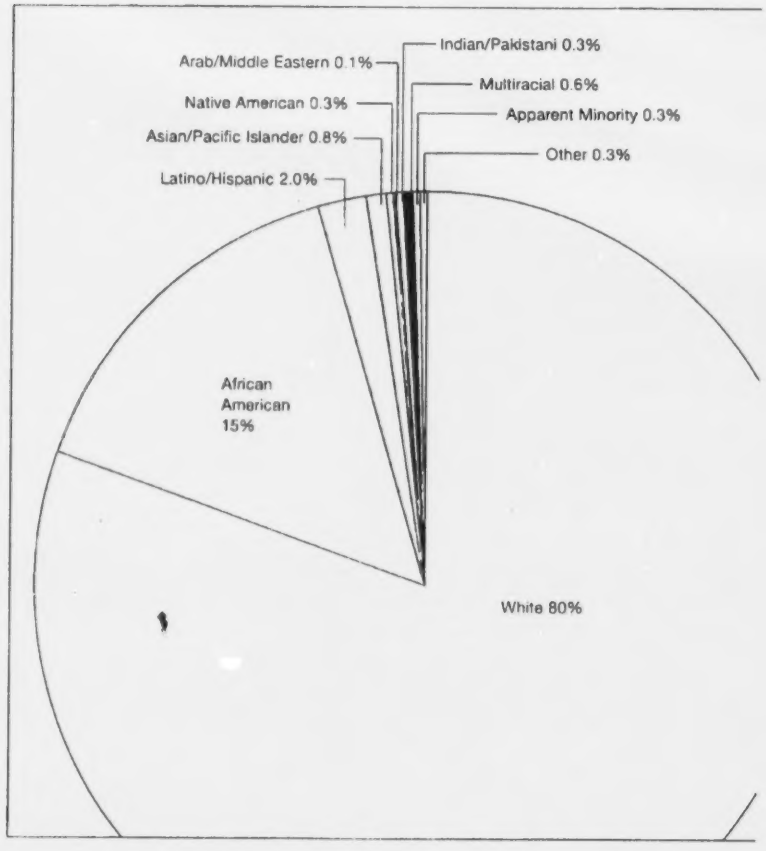
- **It tells children that people of their race are important (84%)**
- **It makes children of that race feel included (81%)**
- **It provides role models (78%)**[1]

Yet an overwhelming majority of youth of color, particularly Latinos, Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans, feel they do not see themselves on television "very often."[2] "Fall Colors 2001-02" confirms these youth's perception of absence in the prime time world.

People of Color in *Primary Recurring Roles* Include:

- Esai Morales as Police Lieutenant Tony Rodriguez (Latino) on *NYPD Blue* (ABC)
- Regina Taylor as Dr. Judith Hackett Bryant, university president (African American) on *The Education of Max Bickford* (CBS)
- Lou Diamond Phillips as John Kanin, police detective (Native American) on *Wolf Lake* (CBS)
- Jessica Alba as Max Guevara, (multiracial) on *Dark Angel* (FOX)
- Ravi Kapoor as Dr. Mahesh Surivananadamupirimahut, coroner (Indian) on *Crossing Jordan* (NBC)
- D.L. Hughley as Darryl Hughley, business owner (African American) on *The Hughleys* (UPN)
- Linda Park as Hoshi Sato (Asian/Pacific Islander), linguistics expert on *Enterprise* (UPN)
- Tangi Miller as Elena Tyler (African American) a college student on *Felicity* (The WB)

Race – Primary Recurring Characters



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Race and Ethnicity

Prime time television remained an overwhelmingly white world. Nearly three fourths of the total prime time population (74%) was white. When examining primary recurring characters only, 80% of the prime time population was white.

African American characters comprised the largest proportion of non-whites in the total prime time population. African Americans accounted for 16% of the prime time population followed by Latinos (4%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (3%), Native Americans (0.2%), Arab/Middle Easterners (1%) and Indians/Pakistanis (1%). When looking at primary recurring characters only, there are significant percentage decreases for Latinos (from 4% to 2%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (from 3% to 1%), Arab/Middle Easterners (from 1% to .1%) and Indians/Pakistanis (from 1% to .1%). Native Americans were the only group other than whites that showed an increase when looking at primary recurring characters (from .2% to .3%).

Crossing Jordan, NBC

Middle Easterners: Life in Balance

Middle Eastern characters on television have a long history of being limited to negative, stereotypical roles. Professor Jack G. Shaheen documented the widespread negative stereotyping of Arab Americans on television in the late 1970s and early 1980s and described how Arab American children had to struggle to find Arab role models on television. He suggested that despite parents' efforts to encourage ethnic pride in their children, television counteracted this critical component of children's identity formation by bombarding them with negative images of Arabs.[9] Shaheen called upon the television industry to create a television series starring an Arab-American character.

While television portrayals of Arab Americans have become less obviously stereotypical over the last twenty years, Arab American children continue to lack role models. In the 2001-02 prime time season, Arab and Middle Eastern characters were primarily shown in connection to terrorism in both fictional and non-fictional programming.

- Partly resulting from a special request by President Bush, the first two episodes of FOX's *America's Most Wanted* featured manhunt stories related to the September 11th terrorist attacks. These two programs accounted for nearly 40% of Middle Easterners portrayed in the prime time season.
- Two fictional Middle Eastern gun dealers appeared in one episode of *Alias* (ABC).

However, in stark contrast to these negative portrayals:

- A Middle Eastern character was featured in a primary recurring role as the leader of an elite secret service team (Frank Donovan, played by Oded Fehr, on *UC: Undercover* (NBC))
- The premiere episode of *The West Wing* (NBC) featured an Arab American White House staffer who was accused and interrogated on suspicion of plotting terrorist activity. He was found innocent.

The prime time television response to the September 11th terrorist attacks varied. *America's Most Wanted* (FOX) attempted to assist the United States government in finding specific individuals believed to be connected to the attacks. Unfortunately, some Americans failed to distinguish between individuals and an entire religious/ethnic group, falsely reporting innocent people and even perpetuating acts of violence against Muslims in America, most of whom were of Middle Eastern origin. Others shows, such as *The West Wing* (NBC) and *7th Heaven* (The WB), played a unique role in promoting cross-cultural understanding in the wake of the attacks. Recognizing their capacity to influence the American public's perception of Muslims, these shows called upon their audiences to distinguish between Islamic extremists and average Muslims in America.

Including more positive characters of Middle Eastern origin on prime time television could help provide American children of all backgrounds with a better understanding of ethnic and religious differences. Further, American children of Middle Eastern origin would be able to watch television and see people from similar backgrounds not cast as terrorists, but rather, as average and even extraordinary American citizens.

"We are taking steps backwards because [black] images are limited and segregated and now everyone is able to say that they've peppered in some brown face in the mainstream shows. But there really isn't an increased number of [black voices] behind these shows."

Yvette Lee Bowser
Executive Producer, *The Jamie Foxx*

There was an increase in the overall representation of Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino characters in the 2001-02 season. This season, the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders increased from 2% to 3% and Latinos increased from 2% to 4%. However, these increases were primarily limited to secondary and non-recurring characters.

White and African American recurring characters were more likely to play primary roles while Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino recurring characters were more likely to play secondary roles. More than half of white and African American recurring characters (61% and 58% respectively) played primary roles while more than three-fourths of Asian/Pacific Islanders (78%) and half of Latino (56%) recurring characters played secondary roles. This was especially true of Asian/Pacific Islander recurring characters who were three-and-a-half times more likely to play secondary rather than primary roles.

Nearly three quarters of the Middle Eastern portrayals in prime time appeared in non-fiction programs. Seventy-two percent of Middle Eastern characters appeared in reality and drama programs. Forty percent of these portrayals were alleged terrorists profiled on one reality program. *(See Sidebar: Middle Easterners: Life in Balance)*

Let's Talk

Very few prime time television programs featured race as an issue. In the shows studied, *The West Wing* (NBC) was the only program to do so. In the special premiere episode, a White House staff member of Middle Eastern descent was accused of having links to terrorists because his name was the same as the alias used by a known terrorist. This episode showed how tensions in society could lead to interpersonal conflict, racism and hatred.

No other program studied featured racial issues as primary story lines, although several programs included references to racial differences. When these references were made, it was usually in a humorous context.

One on One (UPN) included a discussion between a divorced couple, Flex and Nicole, about who should care for their teenaged daughter, Bryanna, while Nicole went to Nova Scotia. Flex argued that he should care for Bryanna because Nova Scotia was a place "where black folks are an endangered species."

Scrubs (NBC) included an exchange between best friends J.D., who is white, and Turk, who is African American. J.D. described how black rap artists use "the N word" in their music, and he wondered if he could use it himself since he (J.D.) was "so down with blacks." Turk responded, "No."

Bob Patterson (ABC) included an African American disabled woman in the role of Bob's secretary. When he first met her, Bob exclaimed to his partner, "I can't work with her!" His partner asked if his objection was her disability and Bob replied, "No! It's because she's black! Black people don't like me."

The Hughleys (UPN) included an interaction between Sheri, an African American, and Dave, a white apartment owner. When Dave initially balked at Sheri's suggestion that she move into his rental apartment, she replied, "I want to know why a white guy doesn't want a sister living over his garage."

Law and Order (NBC) included the following exchange between a white police sergeant and an African American detective (Ed Green) regarding an Asian/Pacific Islander witness who did not speak English. The angry sergeant said, "Why can't these people learn some English?" before leaving the scene. Green remarked to his partner, "When will he realize that in this city, he's the minority?"

Lean on Me—Buddies, Sidekicks and Assistants

Although African American characters were more likely to play primary rather than secondary characters, they were more often featured in comedic rather than dramatic roles. When they did appear in dramas, they were slightly more likely to play secondary roles, often as assistants or best friends to white primary recurring characters.

Examples of African American characters include:

- Best friend Elena Tyler to Felicity Porter in *Felicity* (The WB)
- Best friend Francie to lead character Sydney in *Alias* (ABC)
- Court Services Officer Bruce Van Exel for Judge Amy Gray in *Judging Amy* (CBS)
- Helmsman Travis Mayweather reporting to Captain Archer in *Enterprise* (UPN)
- Stage Manager Melva LeBlanc for Chef Emeril Lagasse in *Emeril* (NBC)

"I don't think I'm capable of telling you how Latinos feel about how they're portrayed on what they see on television. But I can tell you how I feel about seeing Asian Americans portrayed on television. Growing up seeing David Carradine as a Chinese guy (in Kung Fu) takes you off."

Sean Sasso
Former President, NBC

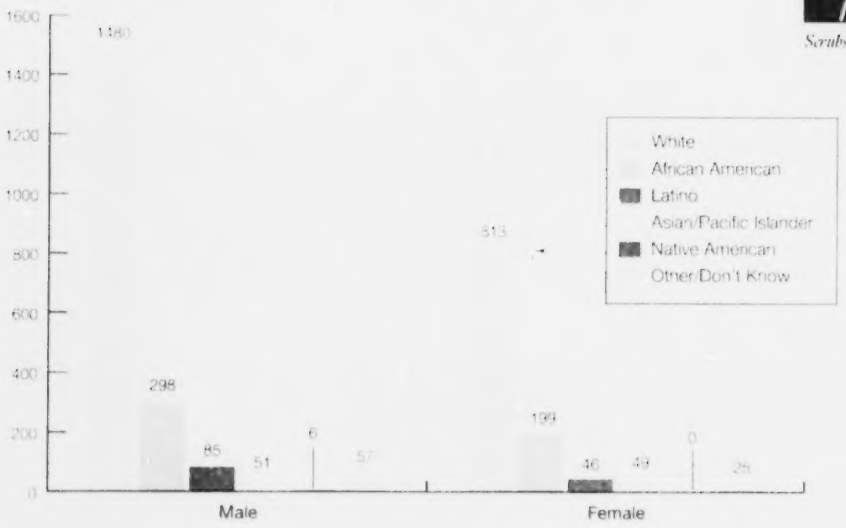
Gender

Television research conducted over the last thirty years has found that males consistently have dominated prime time, with two to three males for every female.[1] Today, the picture remains the same; "Fall Colors 2001-02" found that females account for only about a third of all characters on prime time television.

Not only are there considerably fewer women than men on prime time, when they are shown, they are more likely to be portrayed in more traditional ways. Both "Fall Colors 2000-01" and "Fall Colors 2001-02" found

Scrubs, NBC

Race and Gender Frequency – Total Prime Time Population



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that marital and parental status are much more likely to be known for female characters than for male characters.[1] Further, both reports document that female characters are much more likely to be young than are their male counterparts. Does the continuing emphasis on marriage, parenthood and youthfulness for female characters reinforce conventional thinking about a woman's role in society? What message does prime time television send to both boys and girls when the women they see are not representative of their real numbers, are usually portrayed as young and are often portrayed in traditional ways?

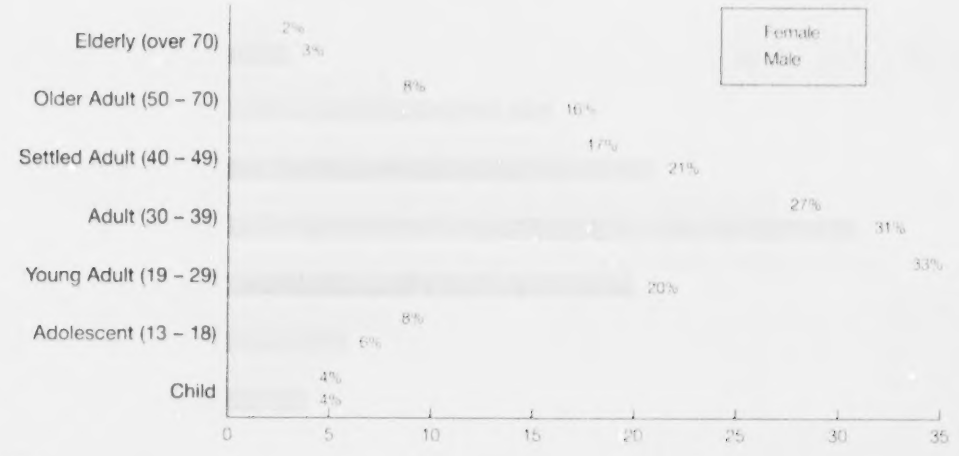
Ally McBeal, FOX

Consistent with most studies of television, the prime time population contained almost two males for every female character. Males comprised 64% of the prime time population, while females accounted for 36%.

African American and Asian/Pacific Islander females were found at a slightly higher percentage than in the overall prime time population. African American females comprised 18% of the female prime time population, while African Americans overall accounted for 16% of the prime time population. Asian/Pacific Islander females accounted for 4% of the prime time female population while Asian/Pacific Islanders overall accounted for 3% of the total prime time population.

Latinas and Asian/Pacific Islander women often appeared in reality programming. Overall, Asian/Pacific Islander female portrayals doubled from 25 in the 2000-01 season to 50 in the 2001-02 season. Similarly, Latina portrayals more than doubled from 18 characters to 46 characters. However, nearly a fourth of Latinas (24%) and more than a fourth of the Asian/Pacific American females (28%) appeared in non-fiction programs, often in secondary or tertiary roles.

Gender and Age – All Characters



There were no female Native American portrayals in the prime time season. Of the 1130 female characters in prime time, none were Native American.

Female characters were younger on average than their male counterparts. Almost half of the female characters in the total prime time population were younger than 30 (45%), compared to just 30% of the male characters.

Males were more than twice as likely as females to play older adult and elderly roles. Fourteen percent of the primary recurring male characters were older adults or elderly, compared to just six percent of female characters. Almost half of primary recurring female characters (46%) played youth or young adult roles, while less than 30% of males played these roles.

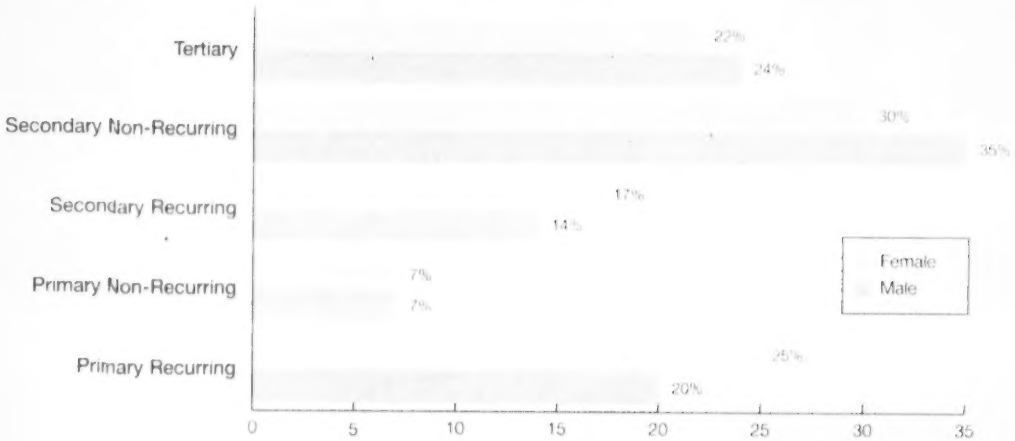
Gender and Role Type

Over half of female characters played non-recurring roles. Fifty-nine percent of female characters were non-recurring characters. However, female characters in recurring roles were more likely to be primary characters rather than secondary characters (25% versus 17%).

Females of all races were more likely than males to play *recurring* roles. Almost one third of female characters (32%) played primary recurring roles, compared to 27% of male characters. White and African American characters were more likely to play primary recurring roles, while Asian/Pacific Islanders and Latinos were more likely to play secondary recurring roles.

Felicity, The WB

Gender and Role Type – All Characters



Enterprise, UPN

Although females continue to be over-represented in traditional female roles as teacher, maid or secretary, "Fall Colors 2001-02" found 26 primary recurring female characters in non-traditional science and technology-based careers. However, only four of these 26 characters appeared in shows airing during the 8:00 hour when youth are most likely to be watching prime time television. According to previous Children Now research, it is important to see women in these kinds of jobs because youth pay attention to characters' occupations. These roles can send strong messages about who gets to do what.

According to a study by the American Association of University Women, women only receive about one fourth of degrees awarded in computer science and it is the only field in which women's participation has actually decreased over time.[14] Further, women make up just nine percent of the recipients of engineering bachelor's degrees. Among the issues accounting for the huge discrepancy is not ability, but the fact that many girls may not have received enough encouragement to interest them in such careers.

In a society that is increasingly connected by microchips and servers, mastery of technology is an important survival skill in education, the job market and the world at-large. By portraying females in strong, meaningful roles in science and technology fields, television may help positively influence girls' interest in and pursuit of careers in technology.

Examples of primary recurring female characters in science and technology-based careers:

- Nina Meyers (played by Sarah Clarke), a computer expert on *24* (FOX)
- Terri Lowell (played by Paige Turco), a computer expert on *The Agency* (CBS)
- Monica Davis (played by Bruklin Harris), a technology specialist on *UC: Undercover* (NBC)
- Hoshi Sato (played by Linda Park), a linguistics expert who uses technology to translate alien languages in *Enterprise* (UPN)
- Zelda Spellman (played by Beth Broderick), a university physics professor on *Sabrina, The Teenage Witch* (The WB)
- Sydney Bristow (played by Jennifer Garner), a double agent on *Alias* (ABC)

Sexual Orientation

The 2001-02 prime time season saw an increased visibility of gay and lesbian characters. Such visibility can send positive messages to young television viewers. For many of them, prime time portrayals are their first glimpse of gay and lesbian life. Honest, non-stereotyped and diverse portrayals of gays and lesbians in prime time can offer youth a realistic representation of the gay community. Moreover, these portrayals can offer positive role models for gay and lesbian youth.

Less than one percent of the characters on prime time were identified as homosexual. About .8% of the total prime time population was gay or lesbian. Nearly half of all homosexual characters (48%) appeared in dramatic programming (dramas and science fiction).

Homosexual characters were far more likely to be *primary recurring* characters than any other character type. While the overall number of gay and lesbian characters remained constant from last year, the visibility of these characters increased. Sixty percent of gay and lesbian characters played primary recurring roles.

Homosexual primary recurring characters were about evenly distributed among situation comedies, reality shows and dramas. *(See Sidebar List).* About the same number of gay and lesbian primary recurring characters were found in different program genres, with four in situation comedies, five in reality shows and six in dramas. Last year, gay characters were more likely to be featured in situation comedies.

Homosexual characters were overwhelmingly white and primarily male. Two thirds of primary recurring homosexual characters were male and 80% were white.

Primary Recurring Gay and Lesbian Characters Included

- John Irvin, police administrative aide on *NYPD Blue* (ABC)
- Carter Heywood, administrative aide to New York City mayor on *Spin City* (ABC)
- Ellen Richmond, high school career counselor on *The Ellen Show* (CBS)
- Joe, a contestant on *The Amazing Race* (CBS)
- Original Cindy, Max's best friend on *Dark Angel* (FOX)
- Will Truman, lawyer on *Will and Grace* (NBC)
- Kerry Weaver, emergency room doctor on *ER* (NBC)
- Jack McPhee, college student on *Dawson's Creek* (The WB)
- Travis Barla, contestant on *Popstars 2* (The WB)
- Willow, college student on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (UPN)

Spin City, ABC

Disability

According to US Census data, about 53 million Americans live with some kind of disability. Of all school-aged children, 12 percent have a learning disability, six percent have a communication disability, one percent are limited in mobility and one percent have a self-care limitation.[11] Yet people with disabilities, particularly children, rarely see themselves reflected on the television screen. The inclusion of such portrayals could help children with disabilities feel included and could provide strong role models for them to aspire to and emulate.

ER, NBC

Characters with Disabilities

Examples of primary recurring disabled characters:

- Logan Cale, friend and advisor to Max on *Dark Angel* (FOX), is a paraplegic.
- Kerry Weaver, doctor on *ER* (NBC), walks with a cane.
- Martin Crane, retired police officer on *Frasier* (NBC), walks with a cane.
- Jake, newsstand proprietor on *Becker* (CBS), is blind.

Less than one percent of all prime time characters were shown with a chronic physical disability or challenge. Approximately 0.7 percent of all prime time characters were disabled. Disabled characters were most likely to appear in dramas (35%), followed by situation comedies (26%) and science fiction programming (22%). Two thirds of disabled characters were white (65%) and 61% were male.

More than half of disabled characters played recurring roles. Sixty-one percent of disabled characters (n=14) played recurring roles, almost half of which were primary recurring roles (n=6). Four of the primary recurring disabled characters were males and two were females. Five of the primary recurring disabled characters were white and one was African American.

Mental Illness

Mental illness affects at least one in four families in the United States. Severe mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or severe depression afflicts 12 to 16 million Americans. Their parents, siblings, children, spouses and other close relatives are also affected.[12] While the occurrence and frequency of mental illness is not related to race and ethnicity, disparities for people of color in need of mental health services can actually contribute to a greater burden of disability for people from these groups.[13] Further, the Surgeon General has reported that one in ten children has a mental disorder and that only 20% of these children are receiving treatment.[14] Prime time portrayals of mental illness can help reduce its stigma, especially for young viewers.

Very few prime time characters were identified as displaying or being treated for a mental illness or addiction. Less than 1% of all prime time characters had a mental illness and about a third of them (36%) played primary recurring roles.

Mental illness and addictions were an overwhelmingly white problem. Almost all of the characters displaying mental illness (89%) were white. Further, all of the primary recurring characters with mental illness or addictions were white and they were about evenly split by gender (6 males and 7 females).

Family

In 2000, more than two thirds (69%) of children in the U.S. lived in homes with two parents and about one fourth (26%) lived with one parent. While the majority of children in single-parent homes lived with their mothers, data reveals that the percentage of children living with single fathers doubled from 2% in 1980 to 5% in 1999.[35] Moreover, it has been reported that in the last decade there has been a sharp rise in the number of gays and lesbians forming families through adoption, foster care, artificial insemination and other means. Researchers estimate that the total number of children nationwide living with at least one gay parent ranges from six to 14 million.[36]

"Family does have especially been a big part of our success and ... we definitely committed to developing more of them."

–Susan Lyne, President, ABC

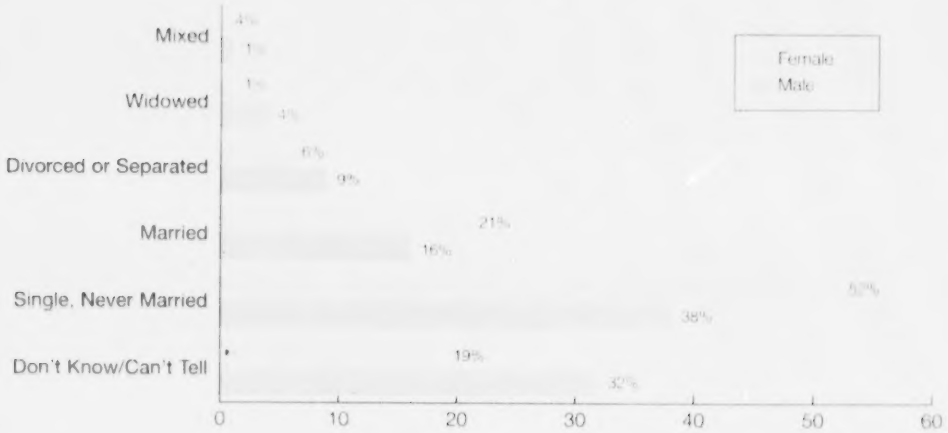
My Wife and Kids, ABC

Family Issues

During the 2001-02 season, television families grappled with difficult issues including teen pregnancy and drug or alcohol use.

- Max Bickford's teenaged daughter tells him she might be pregnant but it turns out to be a false alarm on *The Education of Max Bickford* (CBS).
- When Claire's teenaged friend, Charmayne, gets pregnant, Claire's father encourages Charmayne to talk with her parents about it on *My Wife and Kids* (ABC).
- Reba's teenaged daughter, Cheyenne, becomes pregnant and marries her high school sweetheart on *Reba* (The WB).
- Denise, a high school valedictorian, becomes pregnant during her senior year and chooses to have an abortion rather than attend an alternative high school on *Boston Public* (FOX).
- High school student Lily Finnerty and her friend, Alison, get drunk on hard cider while Lily's parents are out on *Grounded for Life* (FOX).
- Divorced parents Danny and Molly argue after their teenaged son gets drunk at a party on *Danny* (CBS).
- Teenaged Eli Sammler is arrested for drug possession and his divorced parents argue over who is responsible on *Once and Again* (ABC).

Martial Status and Gender – Primary Recurring Characters



Family structure is undoubtedly an influential force in the development and well being of a young person. How prime time represents families can have implications for young viewers as they look for recognition and validation of their own family structure on the prime time screen.

The Hughleys, UPN

Marital status was more evident for female characters than for male characters. Marital status was apparent for 45% of female characters compared to just 30% of male characters. This emphasis for female characters continues to suggest that marital status is more important to female characters' identities than it is to male characters' identities. Further, more than two thirds of all married adults were shown interacting, in person or on the telephone, with their spouses. Females were more likely than males to be shown with their spouses (76% of married females vs. 65% of married males).

Female primary recurring characters were more likely than their male counterparts to be married, while male primary recurring characters were more likely than females to be divorced, separated, or widowed. When examining *primary recurring* characters only, nearly one third of male characters (32%) had unknown marital status, compared to less than a fifth (19%) of females.

About one out of eight adult prime time characters were parents or guardians to dependent or non-dependent children. Thirteen percent of adult characters were parents or guardians to dependent and non-dependent children.

Female characters were almost twice as likely as male characters to be identified as parents. Seventeen percent of female adults were shown as parents or guardians of dependent children compared to nine percent of male adults. Five percent of female adults and three percent of male adults were shown as parents or guardians of non-dependent, adult children.

Everybody Loves Raymond, CBS

While more than half of prime time parents were shown interacting with their children, there were racial differences. Overall, 56% of prime time parents interacted with their children. However, the majority of Asian/Pacific Islander parents (80%) and white parents (58%) were shown interacting with their children, while less than half of African American parents (48%) and just a quarter of the Latino parents (25%) interacted with their children.

Race and Class Status of TV Families

The 2001-02 prime time season had twenty-three family comedies, nineteen featuring white families and four featuring African American families.* None of the shows featured Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American families.

- **Professional parents headed all African American families in situation comedies where family life was the focus of the program.** In a shift from previous seasons, African American families in comedies were portrayed as more affluent than white families.
- Bernie Mac is a comedian and his wife is an AT&T executive on *The Bernie Mac Show* (FOX).
- Darryl Hughley is a business owner on *The Hughleys* (UPN).
- Flex Washington is a TV sportscaster on *One on One* (UPN).
- Michael and Janet Kyle are successful business people on *My Wife and Kids* (ABC).
- **In contrast, working class parents headed half of the twenty white families.**
- Hank Hill is a propane salesman on *King of the Hill* (FOX).
- Jimmy Hughes is a security guard on *Yes Dear* (CBS).
- Kevin James is a driver for a package delivery company on *King of Queens* (CBS).
- Peter Griffin is a toy product safety inspector on *Family Guy* (FOX).
- Red Forman is a manager at the local PriceMart Store on *That 70's Show* (FOX).
- **Even white families headed by professionals often seemed to barely make financial ends meet.**
- Lois Wilkerson is a drugstore cashier while Hal Wilkerson works in an office on *Malcolm in the Middle* (FOX).
- Jerry Stage is a soccer coach on *Maybe It's Me* (The WB).
- Danny is a director of a community recreation center on *Danny* (CBS).

* Other comedies included family relationships but not as the focus of the show.

Almost three fourths of prime time programs included parent-child interactions, most of which were found in situation comedies. Seventy-three percent of all prime time programs featured parent-child interactions. Of the 51 programs featuring primary recurring parent characters interacting with their children, more than half (53%) were situation comedies and over a third (35%) were dramas.

Youth

Less than half of the youth characters were recurring characters. Forty percent of youth characters were recurring characters and this number was evenly split between primary and secondary roles. Female youth were more likely to play primary recurring roles, while male youth were more likely to play secondary roles.

American Family, PBS

There was a slightly higher percentage of African American youth than African Americans in the overall prime time population. African American youth comprised 20% of the youth population on prime time while African Americans, made up 16% of the prime time population overall.

Youth were almost evenly split between situation comedies and dramatic programming. Nearly half of the youth characters (49%) appeared in situation comedies, and almost half appeared in dramas and science fiction (44%).

Nearly half of prime time youth characters had an identifiable family structure. Overall, family structure was evident for nearly half of the youth

Where Are Our American Families?

Over the history of prime time, the story of families has been overwhelmingly told in black and white. This is especially true when examining situation comedies. In the past three prime time seasons specifically, there have been 39 families featured on situation comedies; white families were the focus of 34 of these programs and African American families were the focus of the remaining five.

While US demographics data points to the increasing presence of Latinos in all sectors of American society, as of Fall 2001, the six major networks had yet to welcome and embrace the Latino family in prime time, in a comedy or a drama. This season, *American Family*, a drama about a Latino family in Los Angeles, premiered on PBS. Originally developed for CBS, the network gave the drama to PBS without seeking any compensation, even though CBS had spent $1 million to develop the pilot episode.[23] Some have acknowledged that CBS' decision to give the show away, rather than "shelve it," has benefited the Latino community. However, considering the lack of diverse family portrayals on the major networks this year and in years past, might a greater message of inclusivity been sent by airing it on a major network? This year, a young Latino viewer could tune into PBS to see a family like his own reflected on the prime time screen. An Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American youth would have had no such opportunity.

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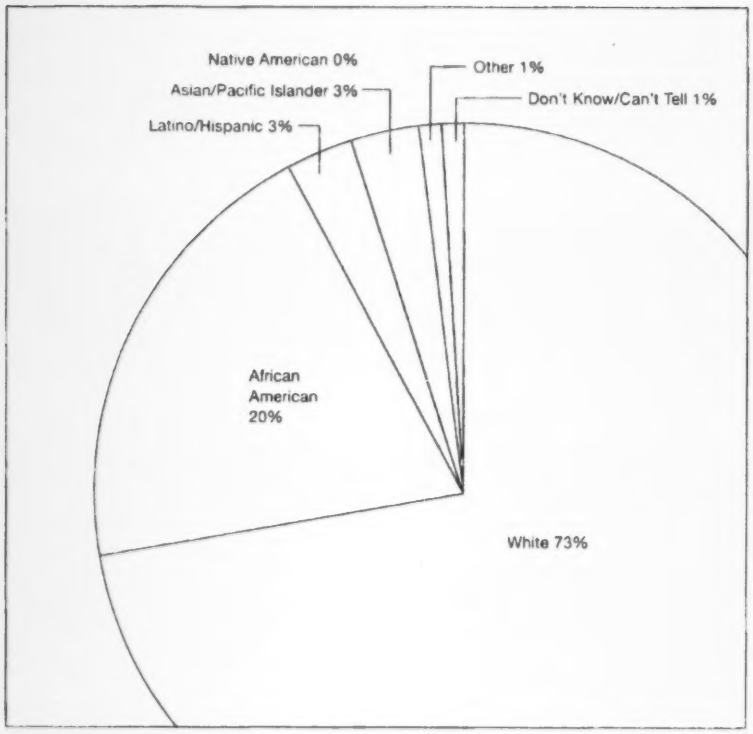
Race of Youth on Prime Time – All Characters



2000 Census data show that there are 71.7 million children under the age of 18, comprising 26 percent of the U.S. population.[11] While the percentage of children is projected to remain stable, the racial and ethnic diversity of youth will continue to increase.

Youth accounted for 10% of all characters on prime time.

characters (44%). Almost two thirds (63%) of youth lived in families with two parents present. Twenty-two percent lived in single parent families, 9% had no parents and 6% were shown dividing their time between their divorced parents' households.

- **Two-parent families were more often featured in situation comedies, while single parent families were more frequently featured in dramatic programs.** Almost half of the 41 programs including two-parent families (49%) were situation comedies, while approximately one third (34%) were dramas. Children from single parent families appeared most often in dramatic programming (69%).
- **Nearly all primary recurring female youth were identified with their families.** Family structure was identifiable for 94% of primary recurring girls compared to 75% of primary recurring boys. Girls in primary recurring roles were twice as likely as boys to be shown in single-parent families (25% of girls versus 13% of boys).

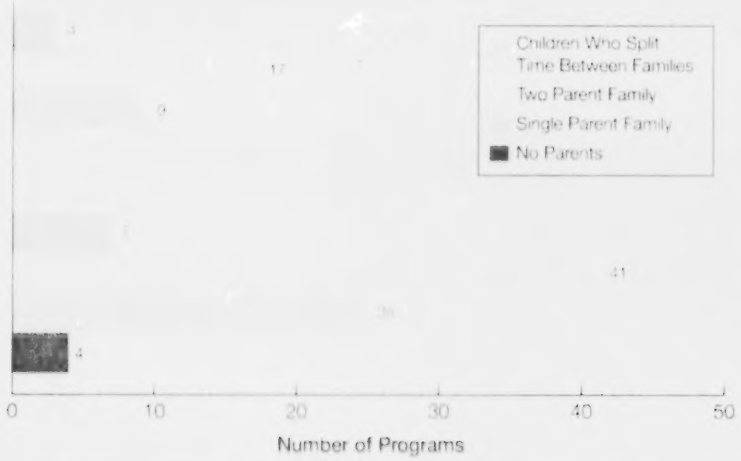
Bernie Mac, FOX

Roswell, UPN

Family structure was more obvious for white youth than for youth of color. Eighty-four percent of white youth in primary recurring roles had an identifiable family structure compared to 75% of African American youth. The sole Latino primary recurring youth had an unknown family structure.

Adopted or foster children accounted for 6% of the prime time youth population. Nineteen youth characters (12 boys and 7 girls) were identified as adopted or foster children. Seven of these children (3 boys, 4 girls) played primary recurring roles in three programs.

Youth and Family – All Characters vs. Primary Recurring Characters



The last few prime time seasons have seen the rise of a program theme that is very popular with teen audiences—the portrayal of youth as aliens and alienated.[25] While channel-surfing through the 2001-02 prime time season, a teenager would find five different science fiction programs that portrayed youth that have supernatural powers but who still struggle with their identities and try to fit in.[26] On The WB, youth can watch *Smallville*, a show that portrays Superman in his high school years, trying to make it through adolescence. The WB also has *Charmed*, a supernatural drama about three sisters who practice witchcraft and struggle with various conflicts. FOX offers *Dark Angel*, which features a genetically-enhanced human prototype who is trying to find her creator and herself. On UPN, there is *Roswell*, a show about three children who survive a UFO crash in a small New Mexico town. They are reunited as teenagers and are bonded by their special powers and their search for their origins. Finally, there is the old favorite, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which features a powerful young woman who kills vampires while struggling with her own identity.

Why are these shows so popular with youth? It may be that while these characters are unusually gifted and possess unique supernatural powers, they are easy to identify with, because they are going through what all youth experience in adolescence: the conflict of developing one's own identity while struggling to fit in. "You can look at a show like *'Buffy the Vampire Slayer'* and see the demons are a metaphor for all of the issues growing up," says Gary Newman, president of 20th Century Fox.[27]

The popularity of science fiction programs among youth audiences provides a unique opportunity for show creators. Youth say that they want to see diversity on the prime time shows that they watch. And yet science fiction programs are one of the least diverse genres on all of prime time. "Fall Colors 2001-02" found that only 20% of all science fiction programs had mixed opening credits casts and 30% of science fiction shows were *all white*. The remaining 50% had only one character of color in a recurring role. Providing characters of color in science fiction programs could help to make youth, especially youth of color, feel less alienated when they watch prime time television.

What Are They Doing?

What people do to make a living is often a central focus of prime time television shows. Occupation can communicate one's amount of influence, social prestige and self-worth. Previous Children Now research demonstrates that children pay attention to characters' on-screen occupations. The jobs they hold communicate clear messages about a character's intelligence, education, ability and social and class standing. Seeing what people do may influence a child's perception of what they envision themselves doing when they grow up. It is essential to examine what characters of color and women are doing, as well as what they are *not* doing. How diverse is the range of careers on prime time television?

"Most of us don't want to play only the victim or the accused roles, but we have to pay rent."

Lupe Ontiveros, Latina actress
Los Angeles Times

Top Occupations for Fictional TV Adults

Professional	10%
Law Enforcement	9%
Attorney/Judge	9%
Service/Retail/Restaurant	7%
Criminal	5%
Small Business Owner/Manager	5%
Physician	5%
Student	5%
Clerical	4%
Entertainer/Performer/Artist	4%

The Practice, ABC

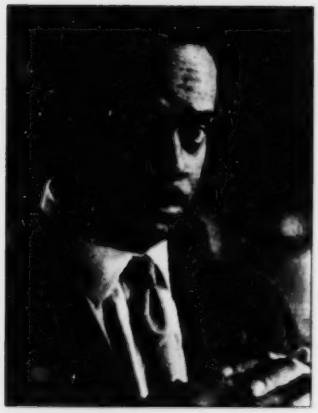
Latino characters were most likely to be portrayed as government agents, African American characters were most likely to be portrayed in law enforcement and white characters were most likely to be portrayed as professionals. When examining primary recurring characters, 31% of Latinos played government agents, 12% of African Americans played law enforcement officers and 13% of whites played professionals.

Latinos were over-represented as service workers, unskilled laborers and criminals. Despite gains in the overall number of Latinos, 17% of their portrayals consisted of service workers, unskilled laborers or criminals. Latinos were the only ethnic group in which both criminal and unskilled laborer portrayals were found within their top five occupations for all character role types.

"When they have African-American people on TV, they always have to joke; they are not the serious people even when they have their own show."

Top Occupations for All Fictional TV Adults by Race

White Adults (n=1352)	African American Adults (n=288)
Professional (10%)	Law Enforcement (13%)
Attorney/Judge (9%)	Professional (10%)
Law Enforcement (9%)	Clerical (7%)
Service (7%)	Attorney/Judge (7%)
Small Business Owner/Manager (5%)	Nurse (7%)
Criminal (5%)	Service (6%)
Student (5%)	Physician (5%)
Physician (5%)	Student (5%)
Entertainer/Performer (5%)	Small Business Owner/Manager (4%)
Clerical (4%)	Criminal (4%)
Journalist/Media Professional (3%)	Entertainer/Performer (4%)
Teacher (3%)	Journalist/Media Professional (4%)



The Agency, CBS

Native Americans were typecast as spiritual advisers. Out of the seven Native Americans found, two of them were portrayed in spiritual roles, one as a shaman and one as a recurring spirit.

There continues to be a stark contrast on how gender influences one's occupation. While both males and females can be found in professional roles, the top ten occupations for females still include the less prestigious occupations of service worker, clerical assistant or homemaker (21%) while the top ten occupations for men only include service worker (7%).

"When producers think of someone who's an all-American-looking girl, are they going to see all Asian-American faces?"

Karen Narasaki
Executive Director
National Asian Pacific American
Legal Consortium

Top Occupations for All Fictional TV Adults by Gender

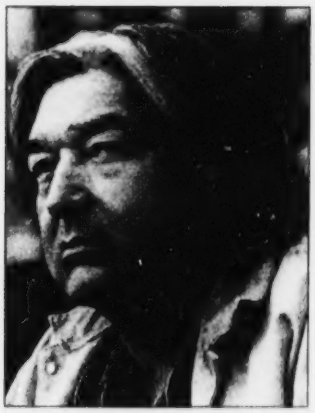
Male Adults (n=1197)	Female Adults (n=584)
Law Enforcement (12%)	Attorney (9%)
Professional (10%)	Professional (9%)
Attorney (8%)	Clerical (9%)
Criminal (7%)	Service (8%)
Service (7%)	Student (8%)
Small Business Owner/Manager (6%)	Nurse (7%)
Physician (5%)	Teacher (5%)
Entertainer (5%)	Physician (5%)
Military (4%)	Journalist/Media Professional (5%)
Govt. Agent (4%)	Small Business Owner/Manager (4%)
	Law Enforcement (4%)

Top Occupations for Primary and Secondary Recurring Asian/Pacific Islander Adults

5 Physicians
3 Attorneys
2 Nurses
2 Managers/Small Business Owners
1 Student
1 Service Worker
1 Professional
1 Entertainer

Top Occupations for Primary and Secondary Recurring Latino Adults

4 Government Agents
4 Law Enforcement Agents
3 Clerical Workers
2 Attorneys
2 Physicians
2 Service Workers
1 Criminal
1 Entertainer
1 Nurse
1 Paramedic
1 Superhero



Wolf Lake, CBS (Courtesy of UPN)

"I would tell the network executives that when a young Indian child watches TV and doesn't see his image on the screen, he begins to become an 'invisible person.'"

—Sonny Skyhawk, Founder, American Indians in Film and Television

Native Americans

The history and contemporary culture of Native Americans is rarely discussed in mainstream media except for the occasional news story during Thanksgiving. When entertainment television and films portray Native Americans, they are generally found in the roles of faithful guides and warring chieftains. Yet in real life, of course, Native Americans have many occupations. As Native American actor Sonny Skyhawk remarked, "American Indians are doctors, lawyers, teachers and cab drivers, yet it seems that we are always being portrayed as savages in loin cloths."[31]

Out of over 3,000 prime time characters in this year's prime time television season, only seven were Native Americans. The only primary recurring characters included detective John Kanin and high school biology teacher Sherman Blackstone from *Wolf Lake* (CBS). The other five Native Americans on prime time included a recurring spirit, George Littlefox on *Dharma and Greg* (ABC), a teenager, Joseph on *King of the Hill* (FOX), a shaman on *Angel* (UPN), a wood carver on *Danny* (CBS), and a competitor on the *Guinness Book of World Records* (FOX).

Children Now research found that Native American children are aware of the scarcity of people like themselves on prime time television. Many kids reported feeling "left out," and receiving messages that Native Americans "shouldn't be seen." When they do appear, youth said that they were stereotyped and typecast, noting, "They're poor." "All drunk." "They live on reservations." "Dance around fires and stuff." "They all drive pick-up trucks."[32]

With such few Native Americans on prime time, the quality of their portrayals become increasingly important. All children would benefit by seeing improvements in both the quantity and quality of portrayals of Native Americans on prime time television.

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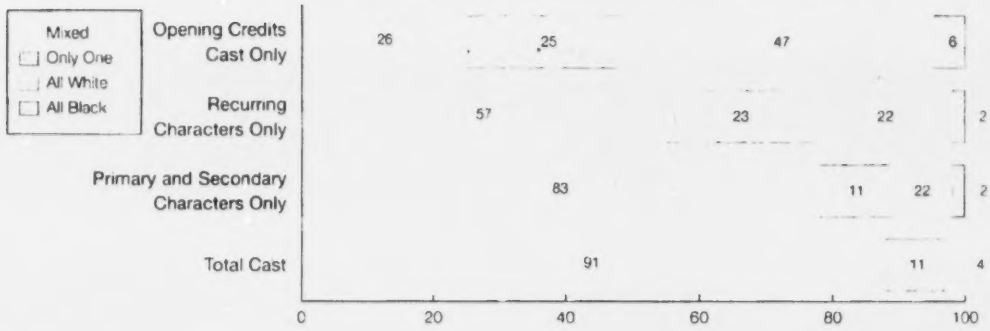
Changing Channels

Youth can change the channel with their remotes but in the 2001-02 season they were not able to make color adjustments. As youth channel surf across the six networks, they were, in fact, likely to see a largely homogeneous picture.

Program Diversity Index for Prime Time – Number of Programs

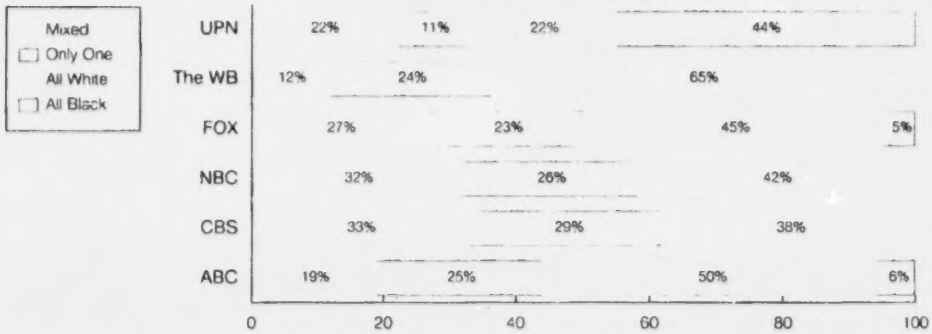


"I'm really surprised by the number of shows that don't have any diversity at all."

—Paris Barclay,
Vice President
Directors Guild of America

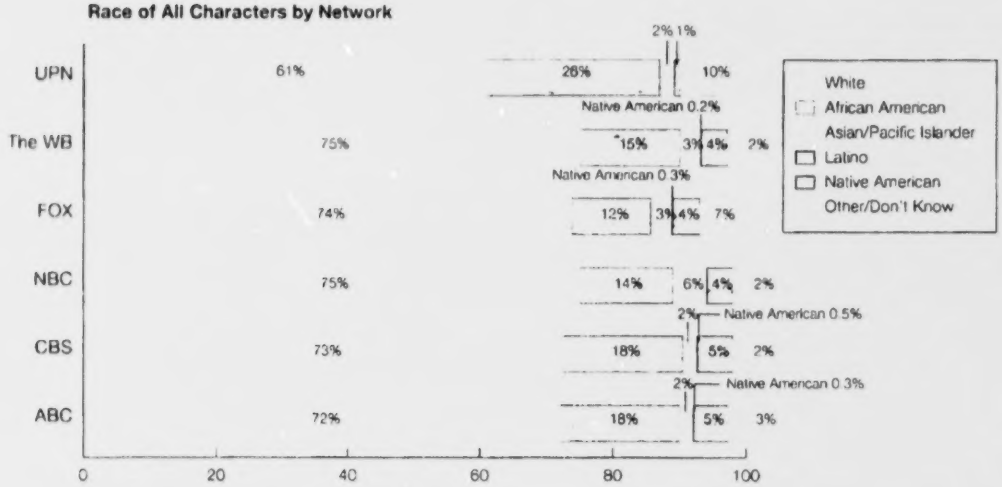
- **Characters of color were featured more often on UPN than any other broadcast network.** More than a third of the characters appearing on UPN (39%) were identified as non-white, even when only the opening credits cast were considered.
- **Except for UPN, approximately three quarters of the characters on each network were white.** The percentages for white characters on ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX and The WB ranged between 72% and 75%. When looking at the primary recurring characters only, the percentage of white characters on these five networks ranged between 80% and 84%.

Program Diversity Index by Network – Opening Credits Casts



- **When examining all characters by network:**
  - ABC and CBS had the highest percentage of Latino characters (5% each); UPN had the lowest percentage (1%).
  - NBC had the highest percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders (6%); ABC, CBS and UPN had the lowest percentages (2% each).
  - UPN had the highest percentage of African Americans (26%) while FOX had the lowest percentage (12%).

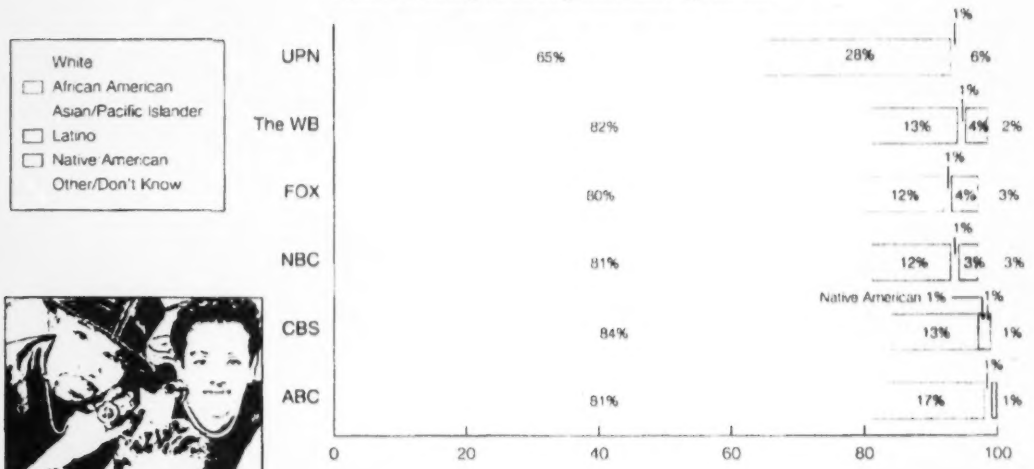
Race of All Characters by Network



- **When examining opening credit casts:**
  - Asian/Pacific Islanders were virtually invisible across prime time on ABC, NBC, FOX, UPN and The WB (at 1% each). CBS did not have a single primary recurring Asian/Pacific Islander character.
  - Native Americans were virtually invisible across prime time. Only CBS featured primary recurring Native American characters (1%).
  - FOX and The WB had the largest percentage of Latino representation (4% each) compared to NBC (3%), CBS (1%) and ABC (1%).
  - UPN had the highest percentage of African American characters (28%), followed by ABC (17%), The WB (13%), CBS (13%), NBC (12%) and FOX (12%).
  - CBS had the highest percentage of white characters (84%), followed by The WB (82%), ABC (81%), NBC (81%), FOX (80%) and UPN (65%).

24, FOX

Race of Primary Recurring Characters by Network



Off Center, The WB

"You don't see numbers of Hispanics and Asians anywhere. It's almost as though they don't exist. They're not in television, you don't see them in movies, you don't see them at all. The second thing that hasn't improved is that lots of all minorities of color really have not seen significant movement as executives. There's not a glass ceiling, it's a cement ceiling."[33] —Charles Holland, Executive Producer, *Soul Food*

Talent Showcases: One Question, Two-Part Answer

In 1999, after the threat of a NAACP boycott and much publicized criticism from a broad coalition of organizations concerned about the lack of diversity on prime time television, the major networks agreed that they would work to improve the diversity of their casts and crews.[35] By 2001, several organizations indicated that the networks were not improving quickly enough to make a difference in prime time diversity. In preparation for casting the Fall 2001-02 prime time line-up, the four largest networks responded with announcements that they would hold actor showcases as a means to identify talent from under-represented communities of color.

Talent showcases represent the network's attempt to improve prime time diversity by focusing on improving the numbers of minority actors. However, the focus on increasing the numbers may be just part of the answer. When casting directors attend a talent showcase, preconceived notions about how a Latina actress or an Asian American male fit into a show may limit opportunities for these actors. Rose Portillo, a veteran television actress, says that she feels conflicted about the showcases. "Of course there should be creative opportunities, and I think it's terrific. On the other hand, they are still pigeonholing people. You must be really Native American or really Latino. And you're still being judged by the dominant culture."[36]

Do showcases give the networks the power to define what it means to be African American, Latino, Native American or Asian American for viewing audiences? Showcases can be an effective way to improve diversity in the most visible segment of the television industry: the cast. But advocates argue that the other half of the answer lies in increasing the diversity behind the camera. Until there is diversity among the producers, writers and casting directors themselves, the roles for minority actors may continue to be limited, stereotypical, or typecast representations. Substantive improvement in network diversity must focus on skill, talent and representation on both sides of the camera.

Is the Picture Really Improving?

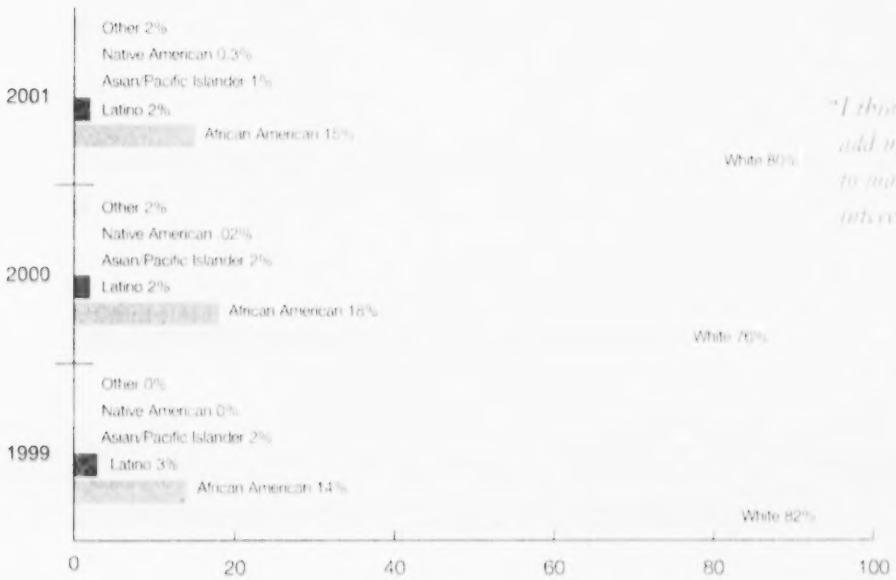
What does a child see when he/she turns on the TV during prime time and how does it compare to the previous two seasons?

This season featured more programs with racially homogeneous opening credits casts and fewer programs with racially mixed opening credits casts than last season. More than half of the programs this year (51%) featured primary casts that were either *all white* or *all black*. This is a marked shift from last season, when 43% of programs featured racially homogeneous primary casts. Further, only one fourth of programs this year (25%) featured racially *mixed* primary casts, compared to 28% last year.

Consistent with the last two years, diversity decreased when focusing on main characters. In the last three prime time seasons, diversity diminished when non-recurring and secondary characters were not included in the analysis. For example, in the 2001-02 season, while Latinos comprised 4% of the entire prime time population, they represented only 2% of the opening credits casts. Similarly, Asian/Pacific Islanders accounted for 3% of the total prime time population but only 1% of the opening credits casts. Conversely, whites comprised 74% of the entire prime time population, but 80% of the opening credits casts.

The Education of Max Bickford, CBS

Racial Diversity Over 3 Years – Primary Recurring Characters



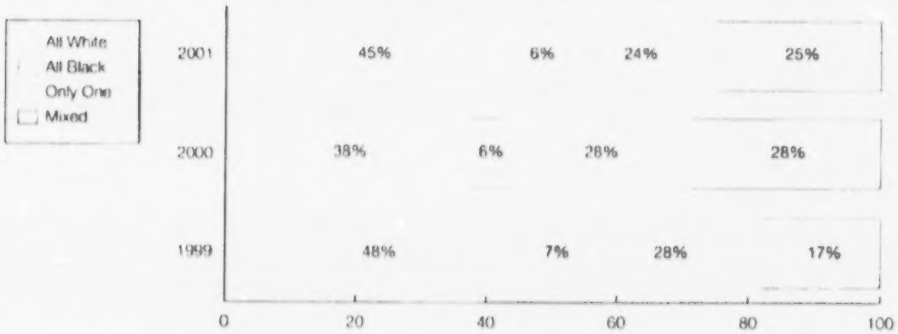
"I think they should add more Asian people to make it more interesting."

Asian/Pacific Islander youth

Rosten Pubic, FOX

- **While the total number of Latino characters more than doubled from 2000-01 to the 2001-02 season, the increase was found mostly in secondary and non-recurring roles.** There were twice as many Latinos in the prime time season this year compared to last year, increasing from 2% to 4% of the total prime time population. However, the increased representation was found primarily in secondary and non-recurring characters. When examining *all* of the primary recurring characters, Latino representation accounted for 2% of the prime time population.
- **This season's situation comedies were the least diverse of the last three seasons.** In the 2001-02 season, only 7% of sitcoms had *mixed* opening credits casts. This represents a dramatic drop from last season, when 14% of sitcoms had *mixed* opening credits casts. In 1999, 9% of situation comedies had *mixed* opening credits casts.
- **Dramas were less diverse this season compared to last season.** This season, 39% of dramas had mixed primary casts, compared to 45% last year. However, dramas remain the most diverse genre on all of prime time television.
- **There was an increase in Latina and Asian/Pacific Islander female characters this year.** The percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander female characters increased overall from 3% in the 1999-00 and 2000-01 seasons to 4% in the 2001-02 season. Similarly, Latina representation more than doubled from 2% in the 1999-00 and 2000-01 seasons to 4% this season. The number of women in prime time has also increased, from 35% last season to 36% this season.
- **Each season, the representation of youth on prime time decreased slightly.** In the 2001-02 prime time season, youth comprised 10% of the prime time population, compared to 11% last season and 12% the season before.

Program Diversity Index Over 3 Years – Opening Credits Casts



While the overall percentage of gay and lesbian characters remained constant over the last three years, the visibility of these characters increased considerably this year. This season, homosexual characters were far more likely to be primary recurring characters than any other type of character. Sixty percent of gay and lesbian characters played primary recurring roles, compared to 32% last year and 31% in 1999.

While the percentage of disabled characters has remained the same over the last three years, twice as many appeared in recurring roles this year compared to last year. Disabled characters continue to account for less than one percent of the prime time population. However, this year, 14 disabled characters played recurring roles, compared to seven last year. Of these recurring characters, almost half played primary recurring roles in the 2001-02 season.

Gilmore Girls, The WB

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Conclusion

Last year, "Fall Colors 2000-01" asked whether the networks would embrace the country's youngest and most diverse generation through a more diverse and representative prime time season in 2001-02. Yet "Fall Colors 2001-02" demonstrates that the story on prime time remains essentially the same.

On the whole, the networks continue to depict a prime time world with very few improvements in terms of diversity. It is a story still told primarily in black and white. It is a world where white males still dominate and as a result, people of color are more often than not relegated to particular types of roles and genres. Women often continue to exhibit stereotyped gender roles regardless of their race, character role type, and occupation or class status. It is a world where certain kinds of people simply do not exist, a world in stark contrast to the one that youth experience in their daily lives and say that they would like to see reflected on their television screens.[35]

The Steve Harvey Show, The WB

This season, the networks' most visible response to increased pressure for more diversity has been to place increasing numbers of people of color in, often typecast, secondary and tertiary roles or to produce segregated narratives designed to target specific racial and age groups. And yet, even with this level of specificity, whole groups of people go largely unacknowledged and unseen. Families are portrayed almost entirely in black and white, and African American families mostly serve as the focus of comedies.

This season, diversity remains concentrated in dramas at the 10 o'clock hour. Children, who are more likely to watch prime time earlier in the evening and who prefer situation comedies, are still presented with a largely homogeneous world.

This season, more diverse faces were seen overall, but few of their voices were actually heard. While Latino characters doubled overall this year, as primary recurring characters, their portrayals remained at two percent.

Further, while Asian/Pacific Islander characters accounted for three percent of this year's total prime time population, their portrayals accounted for one percent of primary recurring characters, a decrease of one percent from last year.

A prime time world populated with diverse characters could provide children and youth with a range of role models to which to aspire and emulate, as well as opportunities for lessons in tolerance and cross-cultural learning. But this is not the story this year. This season's portrayals and non-portrayals of race, class and gender result in an unrepresentative prime time world, similar to the one young viewers have seen for the last two seasons.

Judging Amy, CBS

Prime time television has an opportunity to create a better, more diverse world for its youngest and most impressionable viewers. Children deserve to see greater racial and ethnic diversity at 8 o'clock, the hour they are most likely to watch prime time. Children also deserve to see more racial and gender diversity in situation comedies, the genre they prefer most. Finally, children deserve to see more racial and ethnic diversity not only across prime time, but also in the portrayal of family life, especially as they look for recognition and validation of their own families on the prime time screen. As our culture's primary storytellers, television creators have the power to break down stereotypes, promote inclusivity and build greater understanding. "Fall Colors 2001-02" shows that the networks have told, once again, essentially the same old tale. What will be the story of "Fall Colors 2002-03"? Will the networks create a prime time media environment worthy of our nation's children?

Things to Consider When Thinking About Prime Time Programming

For Network Executives

- Does your prime time line-up, particularly in the hours when children are more likely to be watching, reflect the diversity that children see in their lives?

For Producers

- Does your writing team include members of different racial and ethnic groups? Does it include men and women?
- Have you created a working environment in which diverse members can make valuable contributions to the direction and scope of projects, especially in the area of diverse character portrayals?

"This will be an ongoing effort for us. We're trying to get actors and actresses across the landscape. We're really trying to get colorblind."

Peter Goelitz
Senior Vice President
of Talent Casting, CBS

For Writers

- Can a person of color play the leading role? Can a secondary character develop into a more significant character?
- Do the people of color and women have a diversity of occupations? Are negative portrayals balanced among different racial and ethnic groups?

For Media and Community Advocates

- Continue to promote and advocate for prime time programming that exemplifies the ideals of inclusivity, tolerance and opportunities for cross-cultural learning.
- Continue to frame the importance of diverse portrayals on television for all viewing audiences, especially children.

For Viewers

- Support and encourage diverse portrayals on prime time through letters and email to the networks.
- Vote with the remote.

The Parkers, UPN

Program List

Color symbol indicates programs that appear in top twenty lists for each group.

24 (Fox)
7th Heaven (The WB) ▲
According to Jim (ABC) ▲
Alias (ABC)
Ally McBeal (FOX)
America's Most Wanted (FOX)
Angel (The WB)
Becker (CBS) ●
Bernie Mac (FOX) ▲
Bob Patterson (ABC)
Boston Public (FOX)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (UPN)
Charmed (The WB)
Citizen Baines (CBS)
Cops (FOX)
Crossing Jordan (NBC)
CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (CBS) ▲ ●
Danny (CBS)
Dark Angel (FOX)
Dawson's Creek (The WB)
Dharma & Greg (ABC)
Ed (NBC)
Elimidate Deluxe (The WB)
Emeril (NBC)
Enterprise (UPN)
ER (NBC) ▲ ●
Everybody Loves Raymond (CBS) ●
Family Guy (FOX)
Family Law (CBS)
Felicity (The WB)
Frasier (NBC) ▲ ●
Friends (NBC) ▲ ●
Futurama (FOX)
Gilmore Girls (The WB)
Girlfriends (UPN)
Grounded for Life (FOX)
Guinness Book of World Records (FOX)
Inside Schwartz (NBC) ▲ ●
JAG (CBS) ●
Judging Amy (CBS) ●
Just Shoot Me (NBC) ●
King of Queens (CBS)
King of the Hill (FOX) ▲
Law & Order (NBC)
Law & Order: Criminal Intent (NBC)
Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (NBC)
Lost (NBC)
Love Cruise (FOX)
Mad TV (FOX)
Malcolm in the Middle (FOX) ▲
Maybe It's Me (The WB)
Men, Women & Dogs (The WB)
Mole II (ABC)
My Wife and Kids (ABC) ▲
Nikki (The WB)
NYPD Blue (ABC)
Off Centre (The WB)
Once & Again (ABC)
One on One (UPN) ▲
Pasadena (FOX)
Philly (ABC)
Popstars 2 (The WB)
Providence (NBC)
Raising Dad (The WB)
Reba (The WB)
Ripley's Believe it or Not (FOX)
Roswell (UPN)
Sabrina the Teenage Witch (The WB)
Scrubs (NBC) ▲
Smallville (The WB)
Special Unit 2 (UPN)
Spin City (ABC)
Survivor Africa (CBS) ▲ ●
Temptation Island 2 (FOX)
That 70s Show (FOX)
That's Life (CBS)
The Agency (CBS)
The Amazing Race (CBS)
The District (CBS)
The Drew Carey Show (ABC)

▲ Youth 2-11*
Youth 12-17*
● General Audience**

The Education of Max Bickford (CBS)
The Ellen Show (CBS)
The Guardian (CBS)
The Hughleys (UPN)
The Parkers (UPN) ▲
The Practice (ABC) ▲
The Simpsons (FOX) ▲
The Steve Harvey Show (The WB)
The Tick (FOX)
The Weakest Link (NBC)
The West Wing (NBC) ●
The X-Files (FOX)
Thieves (ABC)
Third Watch (NBC)
Three Sisters (NBC)
Titus (FOX) ▲
Touched By An Angel (CBS)
UC: Undercover (NBC)
Undeclared (FOX)
What About Joan? (ABC)
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? (ABC)
Whose Line Is It Anyway? (ABC)
Will & Grace (NBC) ▲ ●
Wolf Lake (CBS)
WWF Smackdown (UPN) ▲
Yes, Dear (CBS)

* Youth 2-11 and 12-17 year old data based on Nielsen Media Research, AA% K2-11 and K12-17, 10/1/01 - 11/25/01, Prime Time Daypart.

** General based on Nielsen Media Research 9/24/01 - 3/31/02, www.tvzap2it.com

Sample Description and Methodology

This study examined the first two episodes of each prime time entertainment series airing in Fall 2001 on the six broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, UPN and The WB). "Entertainment series" was defined as programming in a serial format whose main purpose is to entertain, not inform. The sample did not include sports programming, news magazines, made-for-TV movies or specials. Programs in the sample aired between 8–11 p.m. PST Monday through Saturday and 7–11 p.m. PST Sunday. Programs were recorded between September 4 and November 12, 2001 by independent researchers Katharine E. Heintz-Knowles, Ph.D. and Jennifer H. Henderson, Ph.C. Since this project focused on 2001 series programming, only first run episodes were recorded.

Touched by an Angel, CBS

All content was subjected to two levels of analysis:

- **Macro-level analysis** that examined the program characteristics such as genre, format, network, airtime schedule, program length and network-determined age based ratings and network content ratings.
- **Micro-level analysis** that identified speaking characters and examined characteristics such as gender, race, occupation, marital status, sexual orientation, family structure and interactions. Characters were identified as *primary* or *secondary* if they were necessary to the plot of either of the recorded episodes and *tertiary* if they had a speaking part but were not essential to the plot.

All content was coded by Katharine E. Heintz-Knowles, Ph.D. and Jennifer H. Henderson, Ph.C. To ensure reliability between coders, ten percent of the sample was coded by each of the coders independently. The percent of agreement between coders was calculated. All variables included in this analysis received a level of agreement of at least 94%.

Note: Percentages in charts and graphs may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Endnotes

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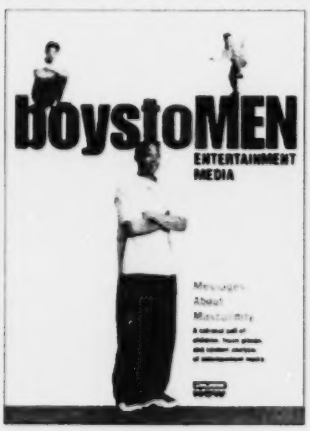
Resources*

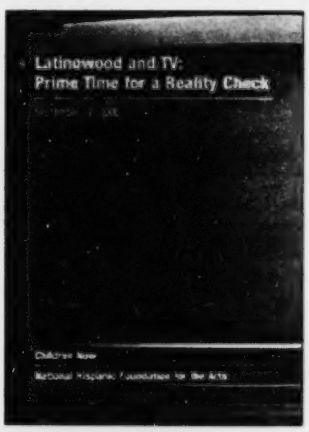
"A Different World: Children's Perceptions of Race and Class in the Media"

"A Different World: Native American Children's Perceptions of Race and Class in the Media"

"Reflections of Girls in the Media: A Content Analysis Across Six Media"



"Boys to Men: Entertainment Media Messages about Masculinity"



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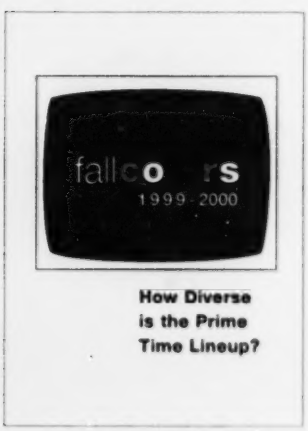
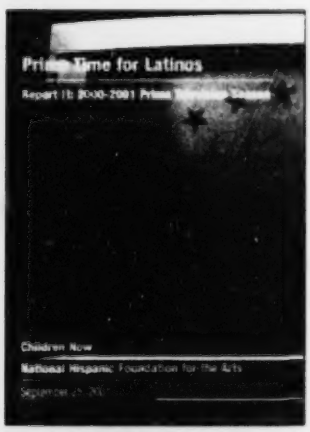


"Fall Colors 1999-00: How Diverse is the Prime Time Lineup?"

"Fall Colors 2000-01: Prime Time Diversity Report"



"Prime Time for Latinos: Report II: 2000-01 Prime Time Television Season"

*These publications are available for downloading at the Children Now web site at **www.childrenandmedia.org**.

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